

Language Access Plan to Ensure Effective Communication with Multilingual Students and Families

Section 1: Policy Directives

This section sets forth the laws, standards, and operating principles that will govern the implementation of Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Schools language access plan.

Policy Foundation

Federal

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was enacted as part of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance.
- Equal Educational Opportunity Act (EEOA) requires states and school districts to provide equal educational opportunity to students learning English by taking appropriate actions to overcome language barriers.
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) upholds language access rights for bilingual families by requiring that students be tested in their home language and Individual Educational Plans (IEP) be written in the appropriate home language. IEP meetings must be conducted in the family's home language using a highly trained and qualified interpreter.

State

Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.32 states:

- Subd. 1. Language access plan required. Starting in the 2025-2026 school year, during a regularly scheduled public board hearing, a school board must adopt a language access plan that specifies the district's process and procedures to render effective language assistance to students and adults who communicate in a language other than English. The language access plan must be available to the public and included in the school's handbook.
- Subd. 2. Plan requirements. The language access plan must include how the district and its schools will use trained or certified spoken language interpreters for communication related to academic outcomes, progress, determinations, and placement of students in specialized programs and services; and how families and communities will be notified of their rights under this plan.
- Subd. 3. Regular review. The board must review the plan every two years and update the plan as appropriate.
- Minnesota Learning for English Academic Proficiency (LEAPS) Act of 2014, Chapter 272, H.F. No. 2397, Article 1. The law has three principal goals for all English Learner (EL) students: 1) academic English proficiency; 2) grade-level content knowledge; and 3) multilingual skills development.

Definitions

American Sign Language (ASL) – A visually perceived language based on a naturally evolved system of articulated hand gestures and their placement relative to the body, along with non-manual markers such as facial expressions, head movements, shoulder raises, mouth morphemes, and movements of the body.

Relay – Telephone accessibility services to people who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, or speech disabled.

Screen Reader – Software programs that allow blind or visually impaired users to read the text that is displayed on the computer screen with a speech synthesizer or braille display.

Interpretation – The act of listening to a communication in one language (source language) and orally converting it to another language (target language). Interpreter must retain the same meaning as the original message without omitting information, summarizing or otherwise altering the message and without adding the interpreter's own thoughts or opinions.

Interpreter – A person who provides interpreting services.

Simultaneous Interpretation Equipment – Equipment that allow a group of people to listen through headsets to information interpreted into their primary language. This method is most appropriate for large group settings and meetings where multiple languages are being interpreted simultaneously.

Language Assistance Services – Oral, expressive, written, and technological supportive services that help students and families communicate effectively with school staff. These services ensure students and families can participate fully in school services, activities, and programs.

Limited English Proficient (LEP) – Individuals whose primary language is not English and who have limited ability to communicate effectively in English, including writing, reading, speaking, and listening comprehension. Federal law uses this term to refer to the intended beneficiaries of language access services.

Emergent Multilingual Speakers – Individuals whose primary language is not English and who have limited ability to communicate effectively in English but are in the process of developing their English language proficiency. Language access industry leaders and advocates prefer the use of this term when referring to the intended beneficiaries of language access services.

English Learner (EL) – A status assigned to students whose primary language is not English, who lacks the necessary skills to understand, speak, read, and write in English but are receiving English language development instructions in a public school setting.

Home Language – The language that is most commonly used in the home by members of a family, or the language that parents use when speaking with their children.

Primary Language – An individual's native tongue or the language in which an individual most effectively communicates.

Sight Translation – The oral interpretation of a written document. This occurs when an interpreter reads a document and then provides a complete oral interpretation of the information that it contains.

Remote Interpreting – Interpreting that is provided via telephone or video call.

Translator – A person who provides translation services.

Translation – The restating of written text from one language (source language) into an equivalent written text in another language (target language).

Vital Document – Materials deemed vital to ensuring access to educational services, programs, and activities, or contain information required by law to translate or provide in audio format.

Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice

Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Schools adheres to the guidance provided by The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) on the Codes of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Educational Interpreters of Spoken Language that can be viewed on the [English Learner Disability Resources](#) webpage. This guide is only available in English because it was intended for language access practitioners.

Section 2: The Plan

Overview

Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Schools language access plan provides a blueprint for bringing the district into compliance with state and federal language access requirements, including how the district will increase its capacity to address language service and resource needs identified in its self-assessment.

This plan is also a roadmap that will help staff navigate the process of setting deadlines, priorities, and identifying responsible personnel for policy and procedures development; hire, contract, assess, and ensure quality control of language assistance services; provide notice of services; provide training of staff; and conduct ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Language Access Plan

Description of Services

The Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose School District website includes a feature that allows families to access content in multiple languages. The District contracts with GBR Interpreting to provide qualified interpretation and translation services, including support for phone communication. When appropriate, staff also utilize the TalkingPoints App to facilitate direct communication with families. For informal communication, Google Translate may be used. Additionally, students and families may request language assistance in school offices, where translated prompt statements in the district's most common languages are available to help parents request support in their preferred spoken language.

Implementation

District administration, coordinators, ELD teachers, and other relevant team members are responsible for overseeing, reviewing, and updating the Language Access Plan, as well as establishing and implementing the

associated operational procedures. Language assistance is coordinated at the school site level, ensuring that interpretation and translation services are provided when needed.

Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Schools ensures that English learners (ELs) and their families have timely and meaningful access to district information and services, at no cost and without unnecessary delay. To support this commitment, the district contracts with qualified translators through GBR Interpreting to provide written translations of essential documents required for EL students and families to access mandated or vital information and services.

Identification and Assessment of Language Assistance Needs

Language needs are identified during the enrollment process and documented in the student information system, which records the student's primary home language.

Timeline

This plan will be reviewed annually and revised as necessary based on relevant feedback. It will be presented to the local school board for review at a minimum of once every two years.

Notice of Services

The Language Access plan will be included in the school handbooks as required by Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.32.

Training for Staff

District administrators will be informed of the Language Access Plan and are responsible for providing staff with guidance on accessing interpretation and translation services. Office staff will receive annual updates on language access procedures to ensure consistent implementation across all sites.

Plan Maintenance

Annually, a team including district administration, coordinators, and ELD teachers will meet to review and revise the Language Access Plan.

Community Engagement and Partnership

Feedback gathered from families, in collaboration with ELD teachers, will inform the ongoing review and revision of the Language Access Plan. The District partners with the Tri-Valley Opportunity Council and its Migrant Education Services Coordinator to support these efforts. Additionally, the District ELD team develops and implements annual parent outreach activities to strengthen family engagement.

Emergency Communication Protocol

The District communicates promptly and effectively with parents in both English and Spanish in the case of emergencies. Emergency message templates have been translated in Spanish using GBR. Unique emergency messaging is translated using AI.

Section 3: Procedures

Overview

This section sets forth guidelines and steps for staff to coordinate, gather data, and deliver uniform services to students, families, and community members.

Procedures

Requests for interpretation—either by phone or in person—from individuals requiring language assistance, including those who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, or speech disabled, are directed to the building secretary. The secretary will provide staff with the appropriate contact information for GBR Interpreting, the District’s contracted provider.

When responding to written communication from individuals requiring language support, staff may use Google Translate for informal correspondence or contact GBR Interpreting for more formal or critical translations.

During the enrollment process, families are asked to complete the Home Language Questionnaire. If a language other than English is indicated, secretaries forward this information to the assigned ELD teacher. After receiving the enrollment information, secretaries record the student’s Home Primary Language and, if applicable, Secondary Language on the Demographics page in Infinite Campus. For accurate MARSS reporting, the Home Primary Language must be a language other than English if the student qualifies for English Learner (EL) services. If a parent requires translation services, the Preferred Language is updated on the Parent Demographics page under Personal Contact Information, and the following comment is added: “Translator Required. Contact the building secretary.”

Interpretation services for meetings or phone calls related to special education require additional documentation which is provided to the Special Services Department. These records include the student’s name and a description of the document, meeting, or call that reflects its connection to the student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP). Special education case managers are responsible for ensuring these interpretation services are properly documented.

Qualified interpreters must be used for Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and special education evaluation meetings, as well as for communication related to the English Language Development (ELD) program.

Each school office maintains a list of translated prompt statements representing the primary languages spoken in the district. These statements assist parents in requesting support in their preferred language.

In the event of a formal language access complaint, an internal review will be conducted, and corrective actions will be taken to ensure compliance and access. All such complaints must be forwarded to the Special Services Department for further investigation and resolution.

Contact Information

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